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ABSTRACT

A study examined the beliefs of parents in relation to their responsibilities and the school's responsibilities in the area of teaching reading. Parent interviews were conducted with three sets of parents of children receiving remedial instruction and two sets of parents of gifted children, all in fifth grade. All parents were from a rural area and were involved in farming or employed in service functions supporting the rural community. Analysis of the data suggests that parents see themselves as providers of reading models, reading materials, and reading opportunities. They expressed concern over lack of knowledge about the school reading program. The parental perceptions of school responsibilities revolved around teaching specific reading skills and identifying and helping children with reading difficulties. The parents also provided suggestions concerning further parental involvement in the school's programs. (Author/MG)

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The Reading Connection

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Abstract

Parent interviews were conducted with three sets of parents of remedial children and two sets of parents of gifted children, all in the fifth grade. All parents were from a rural area and were involved in farming or were employed in service function supporting the rural community. Analysis of the data suggests that parents see themselves as providers of reading models, reading materials and reading opportunities. They expressed concern over lack of knowledge about the school reading program. The parental perception of school responsibilities revolved around teaching specific reading skills and identifying and helping children with reading difficulties. The parents also provided suggestions concerning getting the parents more involved in the school's programs.

1

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to is to describe a study of the beliefs of parents in relation to their responsibilities and the school's responsibilities in the area of teaching reading. Sheldon and Carrillo's research in this area isolated several factors that seemed to be related to the child's reading ability. These factors include such things as number of books in the house, position in the family, educational level of the parents and size of the family. Several of these factors surfaced during my research.[1]

Another researcher, Milner, compared reading readiness scores at the beginning of first grade with the amount of day-to-day parent-child interaction in the home. His research appeared to identify radically different atmospheres in the homes of those that scored high and those that scored low on the readiness tests. In the extreme cases low scorers were forbidden to talk at the dining table. This was believed to result in diminished verbal abilities which in turn contributed to low readiness scores. The parents of high scorers consistently expressed openly their affection for the child. The converse was true of the low scorers. Milner then tried to connect this directly with middle and lower social class children.[2]

I chose this area to study because of my interest in the reading problems of rural children. The study took

place in Maplewood, a large rural school district in the Northeastern United States. This district has about 27% of its elementary children in the Chapter I reading program when the national average seems to hover at about 20%.[3]

There are portions of five small communities within the boundaries of the school district. They represent what is looked upon as typical American small towns. Each of these towns had their own school until they were consolidated at Maplewood. Although the pace of life is somewhat slower than in the nearby cities, problems related to drugs and delinquency rear their heads now and then. Most of the parents are involved in farming or some supporting activity within the area and were born and reared within a few miles of Maplewood. The local residents rarely travel outside of their immediate area. Their children are raised much as they were, with little exposure to the outside world.

I chose five families within the district to be the subjects of my study. These families all have children in the fifth grade at Maplewood. Three of the parents have fifth graders in the remedial reading program and two in the fifth grade enrichment program. Each parent was interviewed individually. Although the actual interviews lasted only about an hour for each parent, I usually spent a total of three to four hours in each home and in one case ended up staying for supper.

As I move into the following sections of this paper I will provide a closer look at the families involved. I will start by giving more details on the family itself, the homes

they live in and the occupations of the bread winners. Then I will discuss their perceptions or beliefs related to reading in the home and in school. Finally I will identify some concerns held by these parents related to reading in the school. This will lead to areas in which further investigation could be beneficial.

Although I went to great lengths to try and keep my bias out of the paper, you must keep the following in mind as you read on:

1. I am a reading specialist.
2. I also taught in an enrichment program.
3. The school that I work in is a small rural school.
4. I was born and raised in a small rural community.

2

Meet the families

In order to make the parents perceptions of reading more meaningful, it seems that you should get to know the parents. Three of the families lived in farm homes. As with most homes of this type, the buildings are well seasoned with age and from the exterior give the feeling of hand pumped water and the old pot bellied stoves. Nothing could be farther from the truth. All three of the homes were quite modern inside. They were all well kept and neat from a comfortable point of view. Books were often seen on the tables and newspapers lay where they were placed after being read. In one home a pot of maple sap boiled and steamed on the kitchen stove as we talked. You still see the old oil cloth on some of the tables, often with cuts here and there just to show that knives are really sharp. A jar of jelly beans sat on one of the tables waiting to be opened. All of the interviews in the homes took place at the kitchen table and in all but one case they were well supplied with coffee. There was often a strange assortment of vehicles parked nearby. In one case a tractor and some old farm machinery sat near the house.

The first family interviewed, Sam and Martha Hart have five children and live on a farm. Mary is in fifth grade and is in the enrichment program. Jack was also in the program before going into high school. Cliff just finished high school and is working on the farm. Mark and Harry are both

students in Big University. The Harts are the only family interviewed that are not from the local area. They came here hoping to earn a living by farming. As Martha put it:

> We moved here to go into farming. We were shipping milk, and it kind of bombed. I went to work to help out until we could make a go of it. Well then the go didn't come so that's how Sam ended up being a Corrections Officer. He worked as a service man for two different propane outfits for fifteen years. Financially he never had a high paying job. This is the highest he has ever had. We always did with less.

Martha works nights so that she is available to do things with the children during the day. An elderly lady made her appearance several times during our discussions. Although we were not introduced, I was told that she was Sam's mother. They were living as an extended family much like many farm families do.

Beverly Brown works on her father's farm. She is the only single parent interviewed. Beverly has two children, Charles in the fifth grade and Jenny now 16 and on her own. Charles is in the remedial reading program at Maplewood. Beverly is a graduate of Maplewood where she was an outstanding student and a member of the National Honor Society.

The final farm family are Bill and Sarah Wade. Bill works his family farm. His parents still live in a house on the farm. Sarah works for the government. She has a master's degree in biology and Bill his B.S. from Hopewell University. They have three children, John in high school, Carol in fifth grade and Peggy a first grader. Carol is in

the enrichment program. John was in the program before entering high school

The last two families live in small villages in the Maplewood district. Joe and Debby Wilson live on the edge of Comfort, a small village of about 200 people. Joe works for the government and does carpentry work on the side. Debby baby sits for several children. She is the only one of the wives that works in her home. They have four children, Mora in seventh grade, Becky in fifth grade, Bobby in second and Mandy who just turned two. Becky and Bobby are in the remedial reading program. Joe and Debby both completed high school. Joe was trained in carpentry in a high school vocational program.

The final couple, Dick and Kara Traber, live in down town Shining Water. Dick owns one of the small businesses in the town of around 200. I met with them for the interview at Dick's store. He had to work late that night and his wife was helping him. Kara works during the day at a nearby county office. They have two sons, Michael in the fifth grade and his younger brother Peter a second grader. Michael is in the remedial program and his brother is in the enrichment program. Both Dick and Kara have the equivalent of associates degrees.

3

Attitudes

One of the most difficult problems faced by the parents of remedial readers is thought to be the child's attitude toward reading. Of the five remedial parents interviewed only two discussed what they perceived to be frustration toward reading on the part of their children. Bev Brown provided the following insight:

> GL: What do you think he thinks or feels about reading?
>
> Bev: I don't know. He doesn't show a lot of enthusiasm. I have been thinking about trying to get him to read, you know, stories more. He'd rather be out doors playing or riding his bike. Going down to the woods.
>
> GL: Do you have any idea why he doesn't like to read?
>
> Bev: (Long pause) Maybe its frustration. Maybe it's a little difficult for him. I noticed how he'd work on home work. He you know, would say mom what's this answer, I'll say why you read it and you find the answer. You know he'd rather have me just give him the answer. He'll get really frustrated and upset and act like he's not going to do it. He'll wait a few minutes and then he'll open his book. He just doesn't have much patience I guess.

A very similar story was told by Kara Traber about her son Michael.

> Kara: He tries to get out of reading unless it's something he really wants to read. He'll read if he is forced, but as far as to do free reading it may be comics, maybe baseball digests. He will read baseball cards, football cards, it has to be of his interest, but he doesn't do a lot of extra reading.
>
> GL: Why do you think he feels that way?
>
> Kara: With Michael, he had a very difficult time when he was in his earlier reading, but I think it was awful traumatic in third grade where he would come home and cry. We had a lot of tears. We threw our books and it was shear frustration because he couldn't read and say

the words, pronounce them and he was having problems with his sight words and a lot of his pronunciation. We worked with it, but - - (She dropped the end of the sentence).

As I will indicate later, all of the parents are employed and many of the men work long hours outside the home and therefor see very little of their children. This could account for a different view of Michael's attitude about reading given by his father Dick.

GL: What do you think they feel about reading?

Dick: Michael likes to read if somebody's with him. He likes it, he likes doing it. It's kind of difficult for me to understand, when somebody has trouble with something you try to shy away from it.

When I asked Joe and Debby Wilson about Becky's feelings toward reading they replied:

Debby: She loves to go to the library and read.

Joe: She likes it. She comes in some nights and starts reading for a half hour or an hour. She likes to read , but she has a hard time. She's enjoying it.

Without exception, the parents with children in the fifth grade enrichment program felt that their children loved to read. As an example Martha Hart described the following episode.

No! I do think that Mary would come home and even though she knew her alphabet She has always enjoyed the experience of school anyway. She's never acted in the bored way that a couple of the boys did. She liked that Mr. Alphabet that they used. She was very impressed with it, but it wasn't teaching her any thing. She thought that was fantastic. She would come home singing the songs or whatever, but it didn't teach her anything so I don't know.

Parental perceptions of reading attitudes support those found in most research. It is interesting, however, to find that in at least one case the father's understanding of his child's reading attitudes is opposite that of the mother.

4

Home responsibilities

One part of my basic question was related to the parents perceptions or beliefs about their responsibilities concerning reading. In order to gain an insight in this area I asked the parents to tell me what went on around the house when the kids came home from school.

From these discussions three areas seemed to be repeated by all of those interviewed. First, they all mentioned reading to their children. This could reflect a feeling that it was necessary for them to provide an adult reading image. It was interesting, however, that in all cases but one the image was provided by the mother. This is especially important since there are those that believe that the reason there are more remedial males than females is that the reading model is usually female. This could result in young males looking upon reading as a feminine activity. Martha and Sam Hart told me:

> Martha: No, I always did read to my kids and my kids always enjoyed being read to from the time they were 18 months old. We would read books, but not Cliff.
>
> Sam: I think Martha helped a lot when they were little by reading and getting them interested in reading. I think it would be a good idea if parents would take a little more time and sit down with their kids and read to them and encourage them to read.

Bill and Sarah Wade both felt much the same as the Harts except in this case it was Bill that was the reader.

> GL: Did they do much with books before they went to school?

Sarah: Absolutely! I was just putting away some baby toys the other day. You know there was some of those old fashioned cloth books.

All of the kids, the one nice thing Bill has done with them. They grew up being read too. To him that was the way he could spend his time with the children when he came home from work The two girls still get stories read to them every night.

Dick and Kara Traber also read to their children. However, in their case they seem to think that magazines and educational books should be used.

Kara: Because they are both boys, we have gone with the sports magazines reading a small article. They get Boy's Life through scouts, I did subscribe to Weekly Reader then this new Freedom series came out on american history. We did buy that series which is a very good series and we have read a few of them. We try to steer it toward their interest.

Dick: Definitely set and read with them. In the fast paced world as it is now, just take time to listen. That's the biggest problem in the world, nobody listens to anybody. You just talk and your thinking about something a mile and a half away. that would be a big help. Just listen to them and let them read to you and read with them.

A second theme that reoccurred in our discussions was related to the provision of reading materials. Although they all felt that it was their responsibility to provide reading materials they sometimes indicated it was the child's responsibility to use them. Sarah Wade expressed her feelings about providing books for the children.

If there is anything the children have, any place you wanted to look it is books and books and books, but we will never say no to books. If I go the grocery store and the kids want the Golden Books. (OC: She made a motion with her hands to indicate the books were theirs.)

As indicated above, Dick and Kara Traber seem to lean toward magazines and educational materials. Not all of the materials were books. Martha Hart told me about letters on her refrigerator.

> We had magnetic letters here on the refrigerator. It was a game. She (Mary) couldn't say the alphabet, she could recognize the letters. They would say this is A and this is B and she would repeat after them.

Bill Wade discussed a computer for the children and his thoughts on reading materials.

> Bill: We got a computer out in the back room, the kids will play with it a little bit. Part of the problem is that I don't have everything working the way it ought to. It's a Tandy 1000. Peggy isn't really big enough to get into it and John doesn't play with it much.
>
> GL: Anything else that parents can do that you can think of?
>
> Bill: I think the biggest thing is to have reading materials available at a level that they will look at. These kids have always had a ton of books. I will buy them books anytime. Anytime we go to a mall one of the stores we have to go to is the book store. I get a few for me, but the kids always get some.

The third area was related to insuring time for reading. The Reading Report Card tells us that there is a positive relationship between reading ability and watching television until the number of hours of TV watching reaches two hours. At this point the relationship reverses and becomes stronger as the number of hours goes up. Several of the parents mentioned television watching as a problem and expressed a responsibility for limiting it. This was somewhat puzzling in view of the different activities the children were involved in. These activities included such

things as sports, Boy Scouts, 4H, music lessons, tutoring chores and homework. It seemed that there could only be a couple of hours or less left for TV on week days. Sam and Martha Hart described their children as being able to tune out the TV and study in front of it. However they still had a plan to limit its use.[1]

> Sam: I think as far as reading, the TV ruins a lot of reading too. We had a practice where in the summer we would just shut it down. News or maybe one night a week or something like that. We did that from the time Harry and Mark were little. With Martha working we kind of got a little lax on it. We still try to practice it. I know one year the TV broke just as school ended and we didn't get it repaired until after school was back in session again. We used to do that all the time . They used to do a lot of reading then.

Both Kara Traber and Bev Brown expressed concern over TV watching.

> Kara: We are trying to make the rule, no TV in the morning because they kind of get glued to that and they become permanent fixtures. We try to curtail the TV, but we are now moving into little league season.
>
> GL: What kinds of things do you think parents should do at home to help their kids read?
>
> Bev: Probably by reading themselves and reading to the children and ah probably also one of the main hindrances is the television. Shutting off the television would probably help.

A fourth area deserves mentioning even though it was not supported by all of those interviewed. The parents of the enrichment children all mentioned talking with their children about what happened in school. This could indicate that they feel a need to show interest in their children's school activities. Sarah Wade and Sam Hart said the following:

Sarah: After supper and during supper it is sit at the table and discuss what we did at school, what we're going to do for the weekend what we're doing the next day, who's going where, anything that happened at school.

Sam: Gee I don't know where to start, They usually come in and tell us what happened right away, in school you know. If they have a complaint or show us something that they have done.

GL: Do you spend a lot of time talking with them about what they do in school?

Sam: Sometimes yes, not every day. I ask how it went. Mary is usually the one that comes home (OC: with something to say), but with Jack, He doesn't say very much.

This completes the section on home responsibilities. There were other things mentioned like teaching the letters and learning how to spell your name before starting school and taking the children to the library. However, it seems that the parents interviewed felt that they were mainly responsible for providing reading materials, providing an adult reading image and making sure the time was available for their children to read.

4

Reading in school

The second part of my basic question dealt with the parents perceptions of school responsibilities related to teaching reading. This part of the question is extremely difficult to answer since the parents knew very little about the school reading program. As you will see from the responses, they seem to feel that the school is responsible for teaching the children to read and as long as they are learning there is no desire to know how it is being done. They were able to discuss several reading activities outside of the reading program and those with children in the remedial program did know about it. In order to get more information I asked the parents to discuss some of their concerns about the reading program. I was able to separate out three areas that they seemed to think the school should be responsible for. First I will address knowledge about the program itself. Sarah and Bill Wade provided this information.

GL: What can you tell me about the reading program at Maplewood?

Bill: I don't really know a heck of a lot about it. The kids will come home and say they read this and they are working on this and that. They're learning how to read so that's - - (OC: He dropped the sentence).

Sarah: The only thing I know of the reading program at school is what used to be which was Great Books. That is the only thing that has ever been identified to me as a reading program. I could never really identify with other than Great Books. Project Read is an outside organization that brings things into the schools.

On report cards it shows reading, but I believe the school could do a little bit more. Maybe I should educate myself a little bit more about what they do read in school.

Similar answers were given by Sam Hart, Bev Brown and Kara Traber.

GL: Do you know much about the reading program at school?

Sam: No. Probably not enough. I know about Project Read Mary is involved in. I don't know if it does much for them or not.

GL: How about the way that reading is taught?

Sam: I really don't know how they're doing that.

Bev: It's hard for me to compare. I don't know what it's like at other schools. So it would be hard to say. I don't have no idea how advanced reading programs in the cities or whatever are so I don't know. It seems to be good to me.

GL: What kinds of things do you think he does? Does he ever talk about them?

Bev: Not to me. He talks about math and like that, probably because he does better in it.

GL: But do you know how the program is set up and what its like there?

Bev: When you go to open house you don't find out much.

Kara: Well up until, -- it must have been when Michael was in third grade I'm not so sure the reading program was set up and then he got involved with the teachers and they said that they didn't know where Michael was at and at that point I didn't think they had a reading program because he'd come home and say he couldn't get his work done and all this well come to find out they were changing and incorporating remedial and regular reading all in one spot.

I think since then they have revamped the program a little bit so that they are not going to remedial reading every day at the same time. They are alternating it so they have regular reading and then they have remedial reading. So I think they are improving it.

Based on the concerns the parents expressed I believe there are two areas they feel the school is responsible for.

First, teaching reading skills like phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and use of the dictionary. Second, identifying and helping those that need special help. Looking first at reading skills and the comments of Debby Wilson, Kara Traber and both Bill and Sarah Wade.

Sarah: The one thing I do have a problem with Carol is that as much reading as she does, I don't believe that there is any emphasis put on vocabulary and the meaning.

If the children were taught to use a dictionary in the first or second grade and taught to understand when you read a word it's not just the pronunciation, but you should understand what it means independent and in a sentence.

I believe we are teaching children to read, but I'm not quite sure when and if we're teaching children to understand what they're reading. If they are, then my children are not as instructional as some people say they are because it hasn't taught them at an age that I think it should have, with as much reading as they do.

Bill: One weakness I've noticed in the reading program with Mary is reading for comprehension. She'll read something like social studies in the book. Then she'll want me to help her answer the questions and she doesn't have any idea what she read or how to relate the questions back to what she read. This is something I've noticed that bothers me.

Kara: I don't know if it's still back to the basics like we were taught with phonics. I'm hoping they go back to that and stay away from the sight reading because with Michael, when they went from phonics to sight reading between first and second grade that's where he couldn't make the transition. So I'm hoping they go back to the old - - maybe it's old fashioned, but I think it's a sound way of teaching reading with phonics.

GL: Can you tell me how you think reading should be taught in school?

Debby: Well, maybe the basic skills. I don't know. I know I can remember when Becky didn't know the basic vowels, but I knew she didn't know them and I could help her.

All of the parents expressed concern for providing assistance for those that need special help in reading. They

appeared to feel the school was as responsible for this as it was for the regular reading program. This was supported by the following:

> Debby: I don't know, I don't know, I think that they need to be tested at a younger age. I think that with Becky we knew she had a problem, but she didn't get extra help until second grade. I knew she couldn't way back then. The vowels she couldn't (OC: long pause) you know.
>
> Bill: Something along the line of a fifth year remedial program. That gets away from the structured this class, this class, this class program into a remedial program that works with primarily reading skills.
>
> Dick: The main stream of kids. I feel its awful easy to let a kid that doesn't keep up fall by the wayside. First we should help him and try to put him back on track. This is what we are trying to do with Michael is get him the help that is necessary. To get him up to grade level where he can compete.
>
> GL: Do you have any ideas about how they should teach reading?
>
> Joe: Well I think if a kids having trouble they should at least give them some help. Where a lot of times they don't. They just brush it off, well this kid can't do it. They feel it's a waste of my time to teach this kid.
>
> If they had another (teacher) come in and say this kid needs help, that kid needs help. She don't teach the kids, but they should have one to say this one needs help, give him some extra help.

Although I was unable to determine the parents perceptions of school reading responsibilities based on their knowledge of the program, I was able to make some estimations using concerns expressed by them. They seem to feel that the school should provide a good background in the skills related to reading. It should also provide service in the area of early identification of reading problems and in their correction.

During the interviews several interesting items arose that were either indirectly related to my basic question or were not substantiated by several of the parents. However, I feel these items are important in and of themselves and therefore, I will discuss them briefly in the concluding section of this paper. Some of these items provide possible areas for further investigation.

5

Conclusion

As was mentioned earlier all of the parents interviewed work and this means that the length of time spent with their children is somewhat restricted. This is not a phenomena of the rural child , but seems to be becoming the norm. Some of the related comments follow:

GL: Can you give me your views of what goes on around the home when you get in from the farm and try if you can to relate it to reading?

Bill: Well I'm on a different schedule than most people. Sometimes I'm here when the kids get home. In the winter particularly. I go up to milk at 4:00. This time of year I'm quite apt to be home day times. Well, Mary gets home at 3:15, Peggy goes to a baby sitter and John is involved in sports now. So He doesn't get home till 6:00 or so. I usually get home between 7:00 and 7:30 so I don't see too much of what they do after school.

GL: What's it like in the mornings?

Bill: I don't see them in the mornings. I'm up and gone before they get up and they're on the school bus before I get home.

GL: Did you or your wife read to them when they were little?

Dick: Not a real lot. Obviously because I see them early in the morning and late at night. I'm here in the store most of the time. For a while they went to a baby sitter. She had several kids and I don't know if she read to them or not because they were so varying in age and so many of them it would have been difficult. My mother was with them at home after they got a little older and she would watch her soap operas and like that. Every once and a while Michael would do crossword puzzles. He loves doing that. They both get a kick out of that.

GL: These questions are a guide. To start, can you give me some kind of an idea what a day is like from the time you get home until the kids go to bed?

Joe: A lot of fights! In the summer time from the time I get home there is only about an hour before they go to bed. What is it you say, I only see them about two hours in the week. In the winter time I see them more.

This is an area that could be looked at in more detail. It would be interesting to see if there is a relationship between the length of time the parents are home and the reading ability of the children. At the same time one could see if there is a connection between the students outside activities and his ability to read.

Two of the parents described a child with reading problems as not being able to sit while being read to. Quite often reading problems are related to what is now called Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). This is the child that is unable to concentrate on any thing for any length of time. The parents described similar behavior, but not what I would consider ADD. This also is an area that could be further investigated. The following was related by Martha Hart and Debby Wilson.

Martha: He wouldn't sit to be read too when he was little. It's not that Cliff isn't intelligent. He isn't motivated. He doesn't want to do it.

Debby: Becky wasn't as interested as Mora was. Becky would just as soon play with a baby doll. Mora would sit for hours, Mandy is just the same. Becky wasn't as interested. Bobby would rather do other things also.

Several of the parents presented ideas about how to improve parent involvement in school. The responses shown below were made to a direct question on how to get the parents more involved. The question of parent involvement at Maplewood deserves continued investigation.

Bill: It would be nice if the school would send us a list of what the kid should be reading. What books they should be reading in the class room and what areas they are aimed at and possibly a recommended list of reading materials that the parents could provide.

Bill: The school might be able to do more in the area of explaining what they are doing. Tell us more about what they would like to see the kids doing. A lot of the time we never hear from the school as far as what they would like the kids to do. We hear what they have been doing, but most of what we hear is what they have done not so much what they are working on. It's awful hard sometimes to get the kids to tell what they are doing.

Martha: I don't know. See I have met with negativism. Everything I have suggested out here. Things that I was highly involved in and they don't have them out here. They say oh we tried that and it didn't work here. They just aren't interested.

Kara: I think that if they were going to go into a major change or go into a new program I think it should be opened up to the parents (....). Maybe if only a short seminar type thing or a one day thing where they come to school and sit in a class and actually, you know maybe even have it explained by the use of the kids. The kids understand it. It's like when they bring home hand writing. I write it one way and they say no you can't do it that way. It isn't the Maplewood way. I say wait a minute, I graduated from Maplewood I think this is the Maplewood way. I think the parents should be aware of what's there and what's being given to our children.

GL: How can the school make you aware of this?

Kara: I think open meetings. Good open meetings where they are advertised and they are for both the working and the people that are home. There could be a couple sessions or they could go out to the different communities and put on small ones say at the village hall or the fire hall or what ever. Or even have small conferences and call and see if they could set up appointments and make it convenient for the working parents.

Sarah: I think what I have noticed in the last three years is the potential that they are possibly not involving the parents in much of the academia choices. To me that's a sign of the times.

GL: And how do you think they could get parents more involved? What kinds of things?

Bev: Maybe a day to just go and observe. You know the

classes and see what they actually do.

GL: It's hard though when the parents are working.

Bev: I could go like a couple hours in the morning. Is it allowed for parents to come and observe?

As you can see from the above, the parents wanted more involvement in at least two areas. They would like to be included more in decisions related to new curriculum and they wanted to be better informed about what was happening.

When starting on this project I was attempting to find out what parents perceptions were of their responsibilities concerning the teaching of reading and what they felt the school was responsible for.

The parents see themselves as providers. They feel that they must provide an adult reading image by reading to their children. They also feel it is their responsibility to insure that their children have sufficient reading materials. These materials come in the form of books, games, magazines or even computers. Finally the parents want to insure that their children have enough time to read. They do this by attempting to curtail the length of time spent in front of the TV set.

The school responsibility was surfaced by looking at those areas the parents thought the school was not accomplishing. They felt that the school was responsible for teaching adequate reading skills. These skills included such things as phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and dictionary skills. They also felt that the school should

identify and assist those needing additional help in the area of reading.

In addition to responding to the original question several areas were identified for further investigation.

Notes

1 Introduction

1 William Sheldon and Lawrence Carrillo, "Relation of Parents, Home, and Certain Developmental Characteristics to Children's Reading Ability," The Elementary School Journal, 52, (September 1951-May 1952): 262-270.

2 Esther Milner, "A Study of the Relationship Between Reading Readiness in Grade One School Children and Patterns of Parent-Child Interaction," Child Development, 22, (March 1951-December 1951): 95-112.

3 This is not the true name of the school. All other names of schools, parents and children are fictitious.

4 Home responsibilities

1 The Reading Report Card, Report No. 15-R-01,National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984.